WORLD WIDE WEB
CURSE AND VIRUS SURVIVAL GUIDE

HOLLY TRI

The best prez in the world!!!

If you are reading this! THANK YOURSELF. It's a dangerous world out there
...and our old safehouses on the Net are becoming strange too!

My name is Molly Sunnyday, I'm the president of the Phantoma Research Club.
We're ghost hunters and internet researchers.
And we're here to give you the lowdown on the spooky side of the digital world.
Now, there's only three of us, and just two if Dusty's partner has to work
BUT THAT'S BESIDES THE POINT.

All my life I've believed in ghosts with my whole heart.
I've never seen one, but I HAVE taken pictures of one.
A few. Nearly every photo ever taken of me, in fact!!!
Everyone always says I'm faking,
but my girlfriend Dusty can see them. So everyone else can SUCK it.

She says there's much worse things lurking in the dark.
So how do we survive them?
What keeps us in the light...
especially now that more people are so sick?
As the world drives itself closer to full digitization,
the world wide web will become more than just the maze it is today;
it will become a haunted continent.

We decided as a group (mainly me; as president, my choices count twice!)
to make this pamphlet for a few ailments that aren't as mainstream as the OTHER big viruses in the room.
The world's too dangerous to care about just one thing!

If you haven't been getting the mandatory texts from The Federated Government
(seriously, how DO I turn these things off?)
then you know very little about Complete Digital Chimaeropathy (AKA Herzer Syndrome).
But what does having Herzer Syndrome even do to you? Well, lots, if you use the net as much as I do!

You might have heard about it on TV, but nothing can be the same as seeing it in person.
I went out to interview Jane Malory about the week leading up to her sister's full infestation.

I caution you, dear reader.
While important information to understand the true danger of the world we live in now,
it is very graphic. Details were as given by our source.

You have been warned.

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"It was sudden at first. First day, my sister's head started to hurt.
Her nose just kept bleeding...I just didn't really know what to do besides try and reach out.
Abby was a bit of a shut in.
Before all this, we'd barely talked despite living together
and when I *did* get her out of the room, things got very strange.
Objects would float around her. Pots jumped off the wall.
The TV spoke to me in the front room as Abby snored on the couch.

As she turned over, I noticed her itching at her scalp. Skin flaked away like it was aluminum
and a thin plastic rod forced it way out of her skull,
bending in the shape of an antenna.
I tried to shake her awake but all I managed to do was get her sick.
She vomited up blood and...microchips. We didn't talk about it.

We had a good three more days before she started showing symptoms again.
Abby left her room every so often to watch TV with me.

She'd been talking with new friends online maybe?
The way she talked about them...I think they were hackers?
Abby told me they had a way to cure Herzer Syndrome.
That she just needed to be online and alone for a bit longer so she could fully understand.

I sighed.
I'd gotten pretty used to her being more invested in what people online have to say than me.
She promised me she'd be okay.

We got Pizza Prince on Sunday night.
I think we watched the Wishing//Falling concert online..yeah.
We both sang along to Hammer That killed The Dinosaurs.
It kind of felt like before she was sick, ya know?
Before she locked herself away every single day...
but reality had to hit sometime.

As the clock struck midnight,
Abby's headache came back with a vengeance...
...and then she...she...

She melted. Right in front of my eyes.

My ears are still branded by the sound of her garbled metallic voice crying for help as I grabbed her hand
and felt it slip greasily through my fingertips.

As she sloshed off her chair,
slick pink blood flowed from her still-beating heart as pounds of wet sopping meat hit the floor.

A hardening carapace made of her liquidized bones hungrily gobbled Abby up.
As the shell cooled, a thin panel of glass grew over the opening, snugly keeping Abby's flesh inside.

Sometimes, when I plug her in, she shows up on screen.
She's always wearing a pure white dress and a serene smile.

We talk every night now.

My head hasn't stopped hurting for two days. But I'm safe here with my beloved sister..."

A heartbreaking tale indeed...
Remember
Always wipe the rainbow dust off your Gazer.
It could save your skin!

Now, Herzer Syndrome IS scary.
It's probably the scariest thing out there right now.
Obviously you might be thinking: how can something
as drastic as that can be considered a disease?

I'm not one to question Tommy Eagle.
If he says it's a virus, it is!
He's just the mascot
who delivers all the rules from the president.
A mouthpiece, if you will.
I don't gotta listen to him all the time...
but he's my buddy, right?
Why would he try to trick me...?

ENTRY ONE- FALSE FRIEND

I spend most of my nights wondering about ghosts living inside the web.
How many people have died while online?

As we all know, in the year 2000 Gazer technology
was released to the general public by Skyview Communications in a partnership with Wonder-Egg
(who would later be bought out
after the disastrous launch of the Vision Plus
which led to the death of hundreds of teen girls around the world.)

With the release of the Eye-Gate 1.0 in 2010
we now have the ability to fully submit our consciousness to the full Net experience.
A cryptographic hypnopattern shows up on a focus device, usually mounted on the top of a computer or phone.
In a room with dim lighting,
the User stares into the pattern deeply until their mind wanders away from them;
at which point the key patterns synchronize with the consciousness of other Users
as well as servers worldwide.
Wandering through the dream voices of others
as your mind expands with an infinity of knowledge has been a boon for us all.

But what happens if someone dies during the trance?
Their mind would have no place to go, and their soul would wander the web wastes forever...
That is how this first entry begins.

Maybe you met them in a charming little chatroom,
or in the middle of a tense round of Wandering A.I.Z.

However it happened,
you've already invited them back to your homepage expecting to have a lovely time
when suddenly you notice something is off.
when you aren't looking at them directly, they seem to be falling apart.
Their eyes begin weeping black liquid as they phase in and out, as if having connection issues.
Their voices might get hollow and backed by a chorus of connection errors...
if you have experienced something like this, do not panic!

The bad news is your system is already possessed by a False Friend.
It is *very* hard to get a False Friend to move on from a host it has grown fond of,
especially if it finds something it was looking for in life with them.
The False Friend may refuse to acknowledge their death, instead struggling to find a way to log off.

The good news is you can deal with them by simply ignoring them.
It will not remove them from the Net;
Nothing can now, but it *will* make them move on in about two weeks.

However, if you aren't careful,
the False Friend will take up more and more of your time when online.
Its real goal is to keep you there.
To make you like them.
Refusing to acknowledging this with a False Friend is essential for survival.
...Dusty would like it to be known that there have been cases
of those affected by False Friends befriending or even ROMANCING their curse.
This is ill-advised,
but it is true that these rare cases have led to an eternal bond.
Take this information with a grain of salt.

For those suffering from Herzer Syndrome:
As the days advance, the False Friend becomes more clingy,
taking up more and more of your vision on the Net.

Eventually, the User suffering from False Friends
will begin to see them in the real world by Day 4.

By Day 6, the User will feel a near irresistible urge
to join their friend online.
Friends of the affected User are advised
to not let them near any Net-enabled device,
as cases of heart attacks have been reported at this stage.

However, those who are affected by False Friends
can choose one extra move from any playbook at character creation.

ENTRY TWO - DREAM POWDER

Dream Powder is probably one of the more
well known afflictions in this book
if you are a frequent web surfer.
If you stare at something for too long,
there are bound to be side effects.

Dream Powder is the transmutation of your iris
into an inky scanline sand
that flows freely around the eye, caused by overusing your Gazer.
It's very important to limit your Gazing to ten hours per day,
or else you're seriously going to go blind!
Thankfully, Dream Powder is completely reversible
with about a week of not using any Net-connected device!

For those suffering from Herzer Syndrome:
The User's vision worsens whenever they connect to the Net.
Every time they do, they roll 1D6.
On a 2-4, their vision worsens for the day.
On a 5-6, they can connect with no side effects.
On a miss, they go completely blind for the rest of the day.
If inflicted with Dream Powder,
the User can gain an additional point of recall (MAX 3) during character creation.

Entry three- Ethericule Myconid spores

Colloquially known as neck ports, Ethericule fungus
has recently been drawn to wi-fi signals.
Its spores rush along signal waves
looking for the warm blood of human netizens to grow inside of.
To date, no Ethericule spore has bloomed anywhere else
besides the front or back of human necks.
The thick metallic ports are actually the mushroom's cap,
despite also working as a high speed internet hookup.
The roots of the fungus grow deeper into the flesh of your neck,
preventing the afflicted from speaking.
Somehow, every single known case can still breath unimpeded.

It is not advised to remove a Myconid from your neck
without first coating it in lemon juice and thermal paste.
This should allow it to be shimmied slowly out by pulling the cap gently forward.
Depending on the severity of fungal growth, bleeding should stop
anywhere from 30 seconds to an hour,
but your voice might take longer to return.
The attached photo was sent in by a contact of mine who survived an infestation and decided to
feed it more blood to see if it would continue to grow.
To their surprise, they found an open high speed wi-fi network
had suddenly started broadcasting from it.

Please don't try this at home
as we still do not know the dangers of mushroom-based Net browsing.

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For those suffering from Herzer Syndrome:

The User's voice vanishes and they are now forced
to communicate digitally
or through some other means of nonverbal communication.
When using PSI, skip all negative effects
and add +1 Harm when used your PSI is offensively
until the mushroom shrivels.

Final entry- Data Fever

Now, I've heard lots of folks on Yeller try and argue
about whether or not this would be good to have. A boon.
I just gotta stop everyone dead in their tracks.
and say that nothing on this planet is good to have.
Having is maybe evil. Sharing tho? The tits.
But this is a safety pamphlet, so let's get you the FACTS.

Data Fever first announces itself by, you guessed it,
causing the afflicted to run 103 fever. After this, icons
from the afflicted's desktop sprout like acne all over the body.
People affected by Data Fever gain a compulsion to store as much data
in their brain as they can from whatever sources they can find.
They will keep cramming it in until their brain runs out of space,
shunting old memories away for new data.
However, while the afflicted is infected,
They will have perfect recall, down to minute detail.
This too has its downsides, as when the brain is
nearing its maximum capacity,The amount of time a person can recall
goes down from unlimited to about 15 minutes.

For those suffering from Herzer Syndrome:
The User's mind expands, allowing them to always use the PSI feature of PSI
involving lifting things heavier than your human limits
without needing to roll.
They also always get a +1 on any roll
involving memory or clever thinking.
However, on days 5 and 6
they MUST remove one skill from their character sheet each day.

Now you should be equipped to survive in the haunted forest of the net.
The only thing left to strengthen is your heart.
See you online, dear reader.

Fresh infection. No visible signs

MODEM

MODEM

Nearing max capacity

HI THERE!
my name is Holly Tri!
I wrote this and drew it!
I also made the setting this is based on

This zine serves as a prequel
To "MODEM: PSYCHIC NETPUNK ROLEPLAYING ACTION!"
Which is a PTBA Roleplaying game me and my collective are
making about Friends online getting psychic powers and
preventing the end of the world. It's also about social isolation
Goverment Propaganda and Illness. It will be Pay what you want (or free!)
Over at teamdigitalemotion.itch.io

The Censor Panda was lovingly adopted from mabsland.com/Adoption.html

Love your self, Love your friends. Connection blooms online. It's vivid.
It can be beautiful and real. It can also eat you alive.
Treat others online with care. Who knows what might be behind the screen...

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